Amendments to the Claims:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for the production of acrylic acid which comprises the steps of:

(a) supplying one or more gas components selected from the group consisting of propylene, propane and acrolein to a reactor for catalytic gas phase oxidation,

(~~a~~ b) ~~a step for~~ obtaining an acrylic acid-containing gas by catalytic gas phase oxidation,

(c) introducing said acrylic-acid containing gas and supplying an aqueous absorbing solvent into an acrylic acid absorbing column, whereby an aqueous acrylic acid-containing solution is absorbed onto said acrylic acid absorbing column

(~~b~~ d) ~~a step for~~ obtaining ~~an~~ said aqueous acrylic acid-containing solution absorbed onto said acrylic acid absorbing column ~~by absorbing the acrylic acid-containing gas with an aqueous absorbing solvent~~,

(~~c~~ e) ~~a step for~~ obtaining crude acrylic acid by dehydration and/or removing a low boiling substance from said aqueous acrylic acid-containing solution,

(~~d~~ f) ~~a step for~~ obtaining acrylic acid and a high boiling substance-containing solution by removing the high boiling substance from said crude acrylic acid, and subsequently

(~~e~~ g) ~~a step for~~ recovering acrylic acid by thermally decomposing an acrylic acid oligomer contained in said high boiling substance-containing solution,

which method is characterized by performing at least either of (i) ~~a step for~~ introducing a polymerization inhibitor to a distillation column at any point except at ~~a stage other than~~ the stage for supplying a raw material to the distillation and the stage for supplying a reflux ~~of said distilling column~~ or (ii) ~~a step for~~ supplying the acrylic acid recovered by thermally decomposing said acrylic acid oligomer to said step (e)~~obtaining crude acrylic acid by dehydration~~.

2. (Original) A method according to claim 1, which further comprises performing the following step (iii) and/or (iv);

(iii) a step for supplying a polymerization inhibitor containing solution together

with an acrylic acid containing solution with an atomizing injecting means,

(iv) a step for thermally decomposing the oligomer contained in said high boiling substance-containing solution thereby lowering the concentration of maleic acid contained in the recovered acrylic acid solution to a level of not higher than 5 wt. %.

3. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1, which further comprises the steps of;

(~~f~~ h) ~~a step~~ for esterifying the acrylic acid obtained in said step (~~e~~ g) thereby producing an acrylic ester, or

(~~g~~ i) ~~a step~~ for further purifying the acrylic acid obtained in said step (~~e~~ g) thereby obtaining acrylic acid of high purity.

4. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1, ~~wherein~~ further comprising the step of cooling the aqueous acrylic acid-containing solution in a tank and/or a cooler ~~is installed~~ between said steps (b) - (~~g~~ i) and the subsequent step ~~is carried out therewith~~.

5. (Currently Amended) A method for the production of a polyacrylic acid or ~~(~~salt~~)~~ thereof characterized by producing said polyacrylic acid (salt) by using the acrylic acid of high purity obtained at the step (~~g~~ i) set forth in claim 3 in a polymerization process.

6. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 5, ~~wherein~~ further comprising the step of cooling the aqueous acrylic acid-containing solution in a tank and/or a cooler ~~is installed~~ between said step (~~g~~ i) and a step for producing the polyacrylic acid (salt).

7. (Currently Amended) A method for the production of a polyacrylic acid or ~~(~~salt~~)~~ thereof, characterized by producing said polyacrylic acid (salt) by using the acrylic acid of high purity obtained at the step (~~g~~ i) set forth in claim 4 in a polymerization process.